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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/16/2027  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PA](#)  
SUBJECT: COLORADOS CAN'T COME TO TERMS

Classified By: DCM Michael J. Fitzpatrick;  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) With the results of the December 16 Colorado Party presidential primary still pending, the ruling party's internal conflict between supporters of Luis Castiglioni and President Duarte's hand-picked successor, Blanca Ovelar, is intensifying. Both sides continue to claim victory, although the Colorado Tribunal has tabulated only around 85 percent of elections results. (NOTE: The Tribunal has closed periodically due to claims that its president, Oscar LaTorre, who remains on the government payroll, is biased in favor of Ovelar. END NOTE). Castiglioni's faction alleged fraud by the "oficialistas," or Ovelar's supporters, and challenged approximately 35 of roughly 5,500 electoral acts in the National Electoral Court. Colorado Party president (and third-place finisher in the primary) Jose Alderete has attempted to mediate the dispute but has not made any headway.

¶2. (SBU) Ovelar supporter and Minister of Public Works Rogelio Benitez said January 14 that the oficialistas "will not permit Castiglioni to break the democratic process in Paraguay and will take the streets to defend Ovelar's victory." President Duarte swore that "over my dead body will they steal even one of our votes." Senator Juan Carlos Galaverna, who became Ovelar's "spokesman" last week, confessed January 8 to orchestrating fraud in the 1992 Colorado primary which led to the defeat of Luis Maria Argana by eventual Colorado nominee and President Juan Carlos Wasmosy. Castiglioni, in turn, released a "manifesto" January 14 which stated that his movement "is ready to mobilize nationally to defend its victory." Colorado officials have floated the idea of postponing the April 20 elections in light of the February 1 deadline to register candidates; opposition leaders have publicly rejected that possibility.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: We are increasingly concerned about the possibility of an unfair Colorado primary result, and specifically, about widespread rumors that President Duarte's faction will steal the election on behalf of Ovelar. This is no longer about vote counting, but about President Duarte hanging onto power. With each passing day, it seems less likely that President Duarte will allow Ovelar to concede defeat. Likewise, Castiglioni insists he won the Colorado nomination despite alleged oficialista fraud. Official results-- based on "closed-door" counting-- were scheduled to be released January 10 and then re-scheduled for January 14; it now seems likely an announcement will be made within a week. Given the possibility of civil protests surrounding the announcement, approximately 30 police officers have been posted outside the Colorado Party electoral tribunal in Asuncion. END COMMENT.

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